

STATINTL

EPHRATA, WASH.
GRANT CO. JOURNAL

JUN 22 1972

SEMI-WEEKLY - 3,439

Insight by Hal Suit:

Secret Documents Shouldn't Hide Stupid Blunders

The illegal release of the Pentagon Papers and the more recent use of secret documents by columnist Jack Anderson has re-opened the problem of what should and should not be classified.

During a conversation a few years ago with the late Senator Richard Russell I asked why the CIA reports on Lee Harvey Oswald's travels in Mexico had to remain classified as secret and why they had to stay secret for many years to come.

The senator was at that time, and had been for more than a decade, chairman of a special appropriations sub-committee which controlled all CIA funds. There wasn't anyone who was in a better position to answer the question than Russell.

He gave me a plausible reason for the secrecy. The senator noted, and it's true, that we have people in every country in the world who are friendly to the U.S. and though not citizens of this country they often supply our intelligence people with information. Some are businessmen, some fishermen, artists, students and so forth. They are basically loyal to their own country, but still willing to help us. The CIA report on Oswald's travels in Mexico contains not only the facts about his movements in that country but the names of the individuals who provided those facts. If the report was made public at this time some of the contacts would end up facing a firing squad and if they weren't shot or imprisoned, they would no longer be of any value as contacts. Their future services would be nil. Since they are still needed it makes good sense to keep their identity unknown.

But what about thirty years from now? This

is the time frame being recommended by the National Security Council as a reasonable time to keep papers secret yet there are opponents around who want the lid to stay on far beyond three decades.

That's pretty hard to buy even from the individuals who claim diplomatic or military secret codes can be endangered by releasing thirty year old data. It seems illogical to assume that codes aren't changed in more than thirty years and even more illogical to believe any nation can keep a code unbroken for thirty years. If this is happening it is a first for all time. A recent rash of non-fiction books have pretty well dispelled the idea that unbreakable codes exist. If a man or woman can conceive them sooner or later another man or woman will be able to unravel them.

Anyone who reads my columns very long knows I am pro-military, but I've long been aware of the military's inclination to mark anything and everything secret and keep that tag on forever. In some cases this practice can be defended, but not for 50 or 100 years. While true military secrets should be carefully guarded military blunders should not. Time doesn't erase stupidity, but it hides it and that's wrong.

During World War II many a bulletin board was so plastered with memos that it was a standard joke that if one dug deep enough he'd find a KP order from Valley Forge still tacked up. If one could actually dig deep enough in Pentagon records there's a chance that some of George Washington's actual orders are still stamped secret. In a free society that's no joke.

MEMPHIS, TENN.

WORLD

JUN 10 1972
WEEKLY - 8,000

INSIGHT

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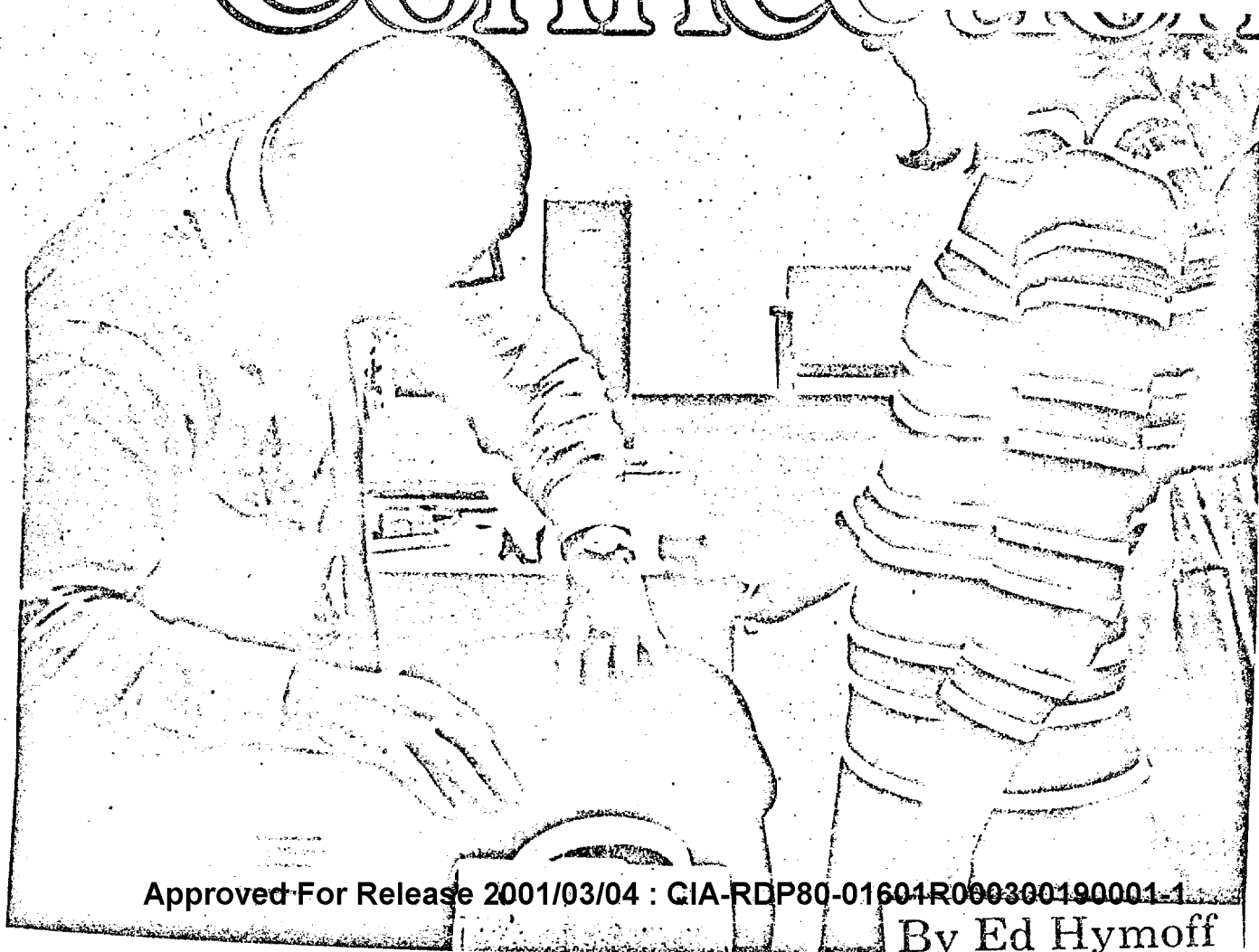
SAGA blows the lid off the South American narcotics pipeline—naming the politicians, generals, and diplomats in Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Panama, and Bolivia who run the “white gold” death racket—that is, the drug traffickers in the Western Hemisphere.

The Latin American

Heroin

Connections

STATINTL



Compliments of Marty Underwood

It's a Great Day! The President Is Coming!

By Richard M. Cohen

Washington Post Service.

When Lyndon B. Johnson was president, Martin E. Underwood had a White House pass, parking space next to the Executive Office Building, and a jet at Andrews Air Force Base reserved for his own use.

Now he is one of the lesser-known members of Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel's staff.

Underwood is an "advance man." When his boss has to take a trip, Underwood goes in advance to pave the way. By the time the boss arrives, he can be sure that Underwood will have patted the important backs, massaged the influential egos, alerted the press, arranged the reception lines, and then will have faded into an enthusiastic crowd of his own making.

If the advance job is done properly, the effect is an appearance of a spontaneous outpouring of good will for the chief.

Nowadays, when Underwood is not out somewhere "advancing" for Mandel, he lives in an apartment in Towson, Md., with his souvenirs and memories of the Johnson years, and he tells interesting stories.

Kennedy First

In the beginning, Underwood was a public relations man for the Schaeffer Pen Co. in Iowa, and he did "contact work" for Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley.

Underwood was in Daley's office one day in September, 1960, when Kenneth P. O'Donnell called and said that John F. Kennedy needed advance men. Underwood recalls the incident this way:

"Daley said, 'Well, there's a guy right here in my office.' Then he said, 'Marty, the Kennedys need advance men. Do you think you can do it?'"

Underwood promptly took off for Kennedy's campaign headquarters in Washington. Later that same day he was in Knoxville, Tenn., paving the way for a presidential candidate he had never met.

Recalling that first job for the Kennedys, Underwood says:

"One of the ladies asked me, 'How's Jackie?' I said, 'She's just great!' The lady asked, 'What color hair does she have?' I told her the wrong color."

"When we got into Knoxville, things just turned out great. We had a big crowd. We had a band out there, just doing it by ear. Kenny O'Donnell got off the

Take university presidents. You put them in the reception line, obligate them, then ask them to turn the kids loose to jam the streets. And how about using the big band?

that goddamned car over there with the motor running?" He said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'That's my getaway car in case things don't turn out right.'

"Kenny said, 'Come on up to the plane,' Kennedy was there. He smiled and said, 'I guess you want to meet me.'

"He and I walked down the ramp. Everybody thought I was really in. There was a big picture in the Knoxville paper. The caption said, 'Marty Underwood is one of JFK's closest assistants.' Christ, I never met him before."

Less than a month later Underwood and Robert F. Kennedy had a row at the Minneapolis airport. The press plane had been kept circling. Robert Kennedy, furious at the delay, lashed Underwood. Underwood quit. He says he never spoke to Robert Kennedy again.

By then, Underwood had moved to Washington. He was with the Commerce Department, putting on trade shows. He stayed on that job for three years, until the Kennedys called again, this time from the White House.

With LBJ Men

"I got this panic call about 10 days before the assassination. Kenny O'Donnell said, 'Can you go down to Texas and help at these stops?' I said, 'Sure, I'll be glad to.' That's how I ended up in Houston. I damn near ended up in Dallas. It was just the draw of the cards."

In Texas, Underwood worked with men who later became important assistants to Johnson. One of them was a Houston public relations man named Jack Valenti. The other was Bill Moyers.

Valenti assumed that Underwood was on Kennedy's staff. When Valenti went to Washington to work for Johnson, he called for Underwood at the White House. Johnson was not then installed in the White House and Valenti had come straight from Houston.

"The guard kept telling him, 'There's no Marty Underwood here,' Valenti said, 'You're crazy, you must be new here. Marty Underwood is the President's man. I just got through working for him.'"